

# Up The Ladder

## Absenteeism policy needed

### PROBLEM:

Absenteeism continues to be a problem for many organizations. A reader says that he has one employee who seems to be absent frequently. The employee lives out of town — more than an hour's commute — and he suspects the employee's absenteeism is a result of car/weather/driving problems, rather than legitimate illness.

If the employee chooses to live out in the country, why should the employer subsidize this lifestyle?

### SOLUTION:

It's really amazing just how many people live a considerable distance from where they work, not by circumstance, but by choice. An hour's commuting twice a day is not that unusual and you'll find that it is also common in large cities.

There is often an underlying suspicion that a long commute means more absenteeism. In fact, research shows that commuting distance doesn't seem to be related to absenteeism. You may find that surprising.

It's interesting, too, that absenteeism is higher in large companies than in small companies. In factories, absenteeism is about twice that in offices. The research also shows that Mondays, Fridays, and before and after holidays have the highest absenteeism, although you probably figured this out already.

In general, absenteeism has increased even though health levels are better. Clearly, a lot of people stay home from work who aren't sick.

**Sandra Woods**



To control absenteeism, you need an attendance policy. Employees need to know that regular attendance is required. If they are unable to attend work they should know who they have to notify (usually the immediate supervisor) and they should report to the supervisor when they return to work.

It's important to maintain individual absenteeism records. This should include all absences, the dates, the length and reasons.

In the case of the commuting employee it would be helpful if you had statistics available. You may find the employee's attendance is as good as or even better than other employees and you may have singled this employee out unjustly.

Many organizations have reported a decrease in overall absenteeism when employees are given some time off to deal with personal matters. Sometimes, attendance regulations are so rigid that employees feel compelled to call in sick to deal with personal matters.

### PROBLEM:

An employee writes about financial woes. He up to his ears in plastic debt. He's been getting cash advances from one card to pay off another and now finds that he can't come up with enough cash to make the minimum monthly payment. Collection agencies are starting to call him at work and he's worried that his boss will find out.

### SOLUTION:

Credit agencies are calling you at work because this is one of the strategies they use to embarrass you into paying up.

Get credit counselling immediately. If you work for a large organization, this may be available through the an Employee Assistance Program. If your company doesn't have an EAP program, many communities offer credit counselling services.

### TODAY'S TIME TIP:

Encourage people to make appointments when they want to see you, rather than simply dropping in.

If you have a question for Up the Ladder, write Sandra Woods in care of this newspaper.

(Sandra Woods is a human resource professional specializing in career planning and staff development.)

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## The Thinker's Page



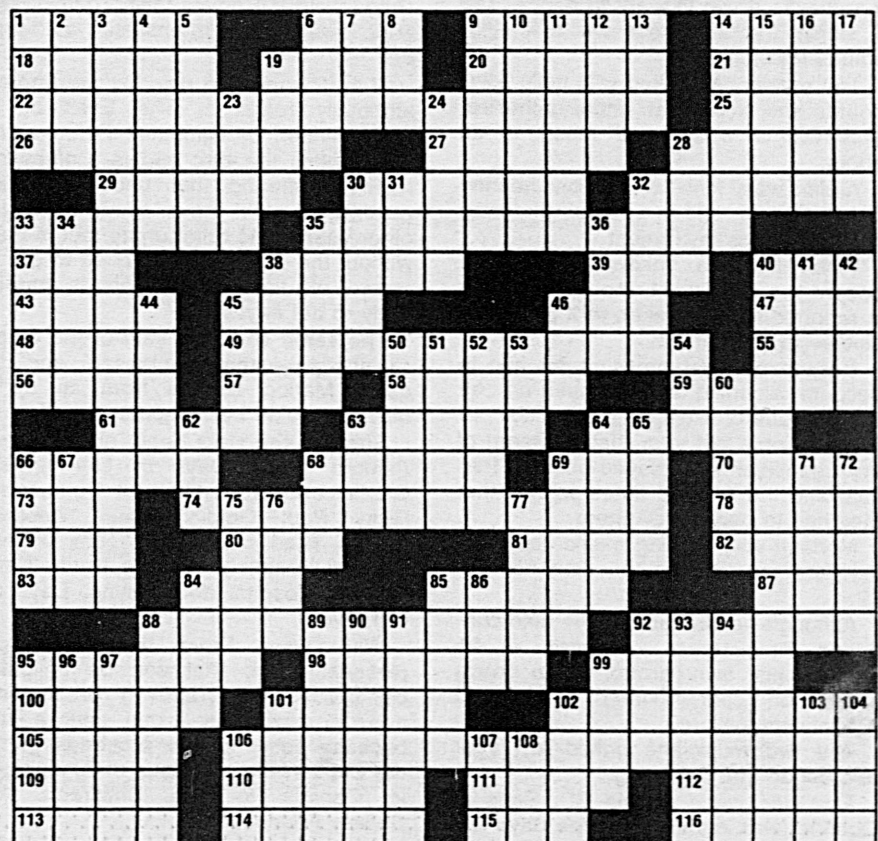
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